

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2025:** 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

*For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or some other suitable time.*

**Theme for today is “Standing up for Christ”**

**Our call to worship Psalm 138**

**Hymn StF 81 H&P 566: Now thank we all our God**

**Prayer of Adoration and Confession:**

Let us pray.

*Silence*

Loving God, we have come to worship you.

Help us to remember that you are here with us.

May we pray to you in faith, sing your praise with gratitude, and listen to your word with eagerness; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Silence*

Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal: have mercy on us.

*Silence*

Eternal God, source of all blessing, help us to worship you with all our heart and mind and strength; for you alone are God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins.

*Silence*

Loving God,

We have sinned against you in what we have thought, said and done.

We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and turn away from what is wrong.

Forgive us for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Silence*

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This is his gracious word: ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn 480 StF 70 H&P**

**The Lord’s my shepherd**

**Introduction:**

It seems that throughout my life, one of the greatest challenges I have faced in my Christian journey is “what does it mean to be Church?” I am like a lot of people in the modern Church who remember the glory days. When I attended Sunday School as a child, we had the Beginners department, Primary, juniors, seniors, and youth and combined there was over a hundred children and possibly fifteen teachers. The Church today looks very different with a vastly reduced membership made up primarily of people beyond retirement age. We also have fewer than a quarter of the ministers in active service than we had sixty years ago, and the tension is that we continue to try to do what we have always done, why? Because we don’t know any different. This is a challenge that has faced the church throughout history.

**Bible readings:            Isaiah 6: 1-8   1 Corinthians 15: 1-11   Luke 5: 1-11**

**Reflection**        *brought to us by Glyn Constantine one of our Local Preachers.*

Brought up as we are in the Church with 2000 years of teaching and tradition behind us it is difficult to think of what it must have been like to be one of the first Christians. What should they believe, how should they live their lives, what’s it all about? No New Testament, no books and definitely no Google to help.

Paul visited Corinth and, unusually for him, stayed for 18 months and founded a church. Sadly, once he moved on the Christians started to flounder and fragment into factions. Remember, no knowledgeable guidance or scriptures to keep them on the right track. The result was a decline in both moral behaviour and spiritual direction, and with no one to turn to things deteriorated rapidly. The outcome was a series of letters from and to Corinth and visits from Timothy, Paul and Apollos. You can piece together some of this from Acts and First and Second Corinthians.

In today’s passage, Paul has moved on from moral issues to answer basic questions about the Christian faith and later about the resurrection of the dead... a particularly contentious issue.

Paul takes them right back to basics... Jesus died and rose from the dead. Why? To overcome evil and reconcile people to God. The Greek word for saved, *sozo*, can have many meanings including the common one of being saved



from something. Others however include something being healed or restored. To restore our relationship with God the creator, our father, is what Paul means by being saved. To believe and accept that Jesus died and rose on our behalf.

The resurrection was the foundation of Paul's faith, and he lists those who encountered the risen Christ as proof, ending with his different but no less meaningful experience on the Damascus Road. Paul reminds them of the Gospel, the Good News, he brought them in which he hopes they believed and still do.

Fundamentally that is what Christianity is about, not how we behave or going to church, although both are important out workings of that faith.

I would echo what Paul says in verse 14. "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith". The resurrection is the foundation on which my faith is based. What is the foundation of yours?

*For reflection:*

When we talk about "church" we always seem to refer to what happens in an act of worship on a Sunday.

- What does your faith look like in the other six days?
- What does your relationship with God look like today?
- Do you spend your time mourning what we have lost?
- Or are you excited at what the future holds?

**Hymn: 594 StF 617 H&P      Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

God our Father, grant us the help of your Spirit in our prayers for the salvation of all people.

We pray for the Church throughout the world for this church and all its members for . . . that in faith and unity we may be constantly renewed by your Holy Spirit for mission and service.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the peoples of the world for the leaders of the nations for . . . that they may seek justice, freedom and peace for all.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our country for those who have authority and influence for . . . that all may serve one another in wisdom, honesty and compassion.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those among whom we live and work for all our neighbours for . . . that we may so use your gifts that together we may find joy in your creation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all in sorrow, need, anxiety or sickness for . . . that in their weakness they may know your strength, and in despair find hope.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In you, Father, we are one family on earth and in heaven.

We remember in your presence those who have died . . . giving thanks especially for those who have revealed to us your grace in Christ. Help us to follow the example of your saints in light and bring us with them to the fullness of your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...**

**Hymn: 250 StF 141 H&P      Jesus call us! O'er the tumult**

**Closing blessing –**

The love of the Father enfold us, the wisdom of the Son enlighten us, the fire of the Spirit enflame us; and the blessing of God, the Three in One, be upon us and abide with us now and forever. Amen.